



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

AHRC CDP studentship topics to start in October 2020

‘The Body as a Battlefield’: an exploration of available material culture that highlights narratives of sexual violence in conflict

By interrogating material from across IWM’s collections and other museum archives, this project will examine how material culture has been and can be used to tell narratives of sexual violence in conflict. As well as performing the useful task of identifying these materials, the project will examine the ways in which historical prejudices have altered how material related to sexual violence in conflict has been collected, catalogued and displayed within museum spaces.

This is a timely moment to act on this subject, with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize 2018 for ‘efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict’, the accompanying ‘Body as a Battlefield’ exhibition at the Nobel Peace Prize Centre, and the public awareness of and discourse surrounding the deployment of systematic sexual violence by violent non-state groups, including ISIS and Al-Shabab.

The causes, course and consequences of sexual violence in conflict can be traced from the First World War to the present day. However, the identification of patterns and themes, the continuities and contexts of sexual violence, and how they are remembered and represented within museum collections and cultural spaces, has been far less well examined. Critical for this investigation, therefore, will be a consideration of the role of museums in shaping cultural and / or museological bias in the collective memory and in the broader understanding of sexual violence in conflict. Collecting policies, the role of artists and the agency of curators in the display and interpretation of content all form part of this study.

The direction of the project will be developed in partnership with the HEI co-supervisor and student, but potential research projects to be addressed are likely to include:

- The recurring patterns and themes, and material or cultural traces, of sexual violence from 1914 to the present day.
- How sexual violence is (or isn’t) represented in museum spaces.
- The ways in which historical prejudices have altered how material related to sexual violence has been collected, catalogued and displayed.
- The role of the museum as a repository for constructed collective memory, and the part it plays in an infrastructure of forgetting.

It is anticipated that the project will involve consulting collections of other museums and repositories or exhibitions they have displayed, including The National Archives, the Wellcome Collection, the National Army Museum, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Eugenics collections at UCL. While the main focus will be on historical resources, it is also anticipated that the student will engage with new perspectives from contemporary cross-disciplinary studies, artists, oral histories and information collected from NGOs and charities.

Application forms and guidelines are available to download from our website:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/doctoral-awards>

The application will provide an opportunity to elaborate on the strengths of the proposal, and any shared research interests. The deadline for completed applications is ***deadline extended* - 5pm on Friday 6th December 2019** - after which they will be judged by a panel selected by IWM.

If you have any queries, please contact Hannah Wills, Research Manager on 020 7416 5461 or email: hwills@iwm.org.uk